

FIRST THINGS

WHERE LIBERALISM HELPS

by
Jozef Andrew Kosc
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A vast oblong of Islamist, authoritarian, or sectarian persecution stretches from Egypt, Eritrea, Turkey, and Sudan, all the way to China and North Korea, across India and Pakistan. According to a recent report published by Aid to the Church in Need, “the persecution of Christians is today worse than at any time in history.”

On the African continent, predominantly Christian nations experience the full threat of a growing tide of Islamist militancy. Already reeling from mass genocide and expulsion at the hands of Boko Haram (whose casualties include some 1.8 million displaced persons, five thousand widows, 15,000 orphans, and more than two hundred desecrated churches and chapels), the Christians of Nigeria now have to contend with new militant factions. The Fulani herdsmen have terrorized country parishes across the nation’s northern and central provinces in recent months, in what more and more secular and religious leaders are recognizing as a targeted Islamist persecution. An escalated campaign of violence began with the New Year’s Day massacre of seventy-two Christian farmers in the Benue state. In April, two priests were murdered alongside seventeen parishioners while celebrating Mass in the community of Mbalom, in the same province. The militants went on to pillage and burn fifty neighboring homes. Then in late June, some two hundred Christian farmers, many of them women and children, were massacred over a four-day period in multiple villages across the Plateau state. It is estimated that the herdsmen, using increasingly sophisticated firearms, have murdered hundreds of Christians since the start of 2018.

In response to ever more frequent attacks, the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Nigeria has issued two reports condemning the nation’s security forces and local government officials for turning